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MINUTES

OF THE

WESTERN

Congregational Convention,

HELD IN

MICHIGAN CITY INDIANA.

JULY 30—AUGUST 3, 1846.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY ONE OF THE SECRETARIES

AND AN APPENDIX.

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NEW YORK.

JOHN P. PRALL, PRINTER, 9 SPRUCE STREET.

1878

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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The immediate and remote results of the Michigan City Convention, were such as to entitle its proceedings to publication in a more accessible and permanent form, than they have received. In undertaking the present issue, it has seemed desirable for the sake of readers who are scarcely aware that such a Convention was ever held, to furnish an introductory statement showing briefly what general reasons seemed to warrant its call, and what was the particular occasion of its assembling.

The division of the Presbyterian church had produced two bodies sustaining towards each other the relation of rivals. One of these—the New School body, was however, much the weaker, both in numbers and resources. As was natural, there was soon developed among them a large measure of the *esprit de corps*, and it soon appeared to some of them—particularly at the West, that a rapid and substantial growth would be secured, if the Congregational churches of that region, and the valuable Congregational element rapidly coming in from New England and New York, could be absorbed, and the formation of other such churches prevented,—except as they should be willing to connect themselves with the Presbyteries.

Accordingly the framers of the Plan of Union of 1801, were much praised for their catholicity and wisdom, and the Plan itself was warmly commended to Congregational churches as a happy measure for unity and strength. Congregational ministers entering the West, were urged to connect themselves with Presbyteries. They were referred to the example of numbers who had done so; were assured that Congregationalism as a government was not strong enough for the western people; that the West was really Presbyterian ground; that there was no certainty of obtaining aid from the Home Missionary Society, except through the Presbyterian channel; and that all attempts to organize and promote “distinctive Congregationalism”—as some of them were accustomed to phrase it—would be looked upon and treated as sectarian and schismatic.

The New School Assembly had adopted the plan of holding only triennial meetings. This afforded an opportunity for the employ-

ment of another means for the extinguishment of the kindling interest in Congregationalism. A series of conventions was arranged and held in prominent cities of the West, occurring in those years when the Assembly did not meet. They were called "Presbyterian and Congregational." Congregationalists were carefully invited, and in many instances urged to attend; but in each convention, they were a small minority. The meetings were large and interesting, comprising many of the leading New School ministers of the West. While of course, there was nothing in the language of the call convening these Conventions that would indicate any design against the Congregational polity, and while many of the Presbyterians attending them, had no such design, yet there were others—not a few—men of position and influence—men whose words gave shape and tone and spirit to the meetings, whose purpose in this respect, was at length, fortunately, only too apparent.

One of these Conventions was held at Detroit, Michigan, in June, 1845. The writer of this was a member, and was chosen one of its Secretaries. The meeting was large, and in its membership and spirit, essentially Presbyterian. Many of the Congregationalists present, were young men, inexperienced and but imperfectly acquainted with one another; and when they perceived that the remarks occasionally dropped unduly exalting the Presbyterian polity, or disparaging their own, were but indications of the main current of feeling in the Convention, they seriously felt the disadvantage of their position. But when at length, they found a considerable part of one afternoon occupied with speeches from Doctors of Divinity, Theological Professors, and others of the ablest and most eminent men in the Convention,—setting forth their opinion that Presbyterianism Congregationalized, and Congregationalism Presbyterianized, made the best ecclesiastical polity for the West, and not obscurely intimating that just about that was afforded by the New School body;—when they heard these men bestowing lavish compliments on New England institutions,—glorying in having been born and educated among the Congregational churches, and then glorying a little more, in having abandoned them for the Presbyterian connection,—thus giving the fact of their own example in favor of such a course;—when they heard these men claiming that they were still true representatives of the churches which they had forsaken, and more than hinting that those Congregationalists who refused to unite with a Presbytery, and persisted in efforts to promote "dis-

tinctive Congregationalism,"—that is, *real* Congregationalism, were doing great mischief, and deserved no stinted censure;—when they heard these things, they were filled with sadness: and if some of them were dispirited, it is certain that most of them were filled with a firmer purpose to resist this scheme of absorption, and to do all they honorably could, to maintain and advance in the West, the polity of the Pilgrims.

Rev. Parsons Cooke, one of the editors of *The New England Puritan*, was present, and an attentive observer of all that was passing. Near the close of the speeches just referred to, he came to the table where the writer was employed and enquired,—“Have you given attention to the remarks just made? What do you think of them?” It was replied,—“Yes, I have heard them with much sorrow, and fear for their mischievous tendency.” He asked, “What can be done to counteract this?” It was answered, “We must have a Convention of our own; let us confer about it after the adjournment.”

A recess was presently taken, most of which was spent in conversation upon this subject. We were agreed in the opinion that the Congregationalists of the West, ought to meet and confer together fully on all matters affecting their increase and prosperity as churches. Two or three other ministers who were consulted, concurred in this view,—and before the conversation closed, the writer suggested that the General Association of Michigan would be the proper body to call the proposed Convention, and he engaged to submit the matter for their action at the next meeting.

Accordingly at the meeting of the Association held in Detroit, on the 30th of September, 1845, the subject was fully laid before the body, and resulted in their unanimous adoption of a resolution approving the proposal, and in the appointment of a committee with instructions to determine the time and place, and to issue a call for a Congregational Convention, to be held the ensuing summer.

The following is a copy of the call issued by the Committee:—

#### Western Congregational Convention.

It was resolved by the General Association of Michigan at their last annual meeting, to call a Convention of Congregationalists to be held the present year,—for mutual consultation on the condition, prospects, and wants of the Congregational churches of the West; the advancement of the various enterprises of Christian benevolence and philanthropy; and for the promotion of true religion generally.

The undersigned were appointed a committee to fix upon the time

and place, and issue the call for such Convention ; and they would now announce that they have agreed upon Thursday the 30th of July next, as the proper time,—and Michigan City, Indiana, as the proper place for holding the Convention.

The Committee do therefore, in behalf of the body by whom they were appointed, and in accordance with their instructions, most cordially invite the orthodox Congregational ministers in our country and the adjoining provinces, who are members in regular standing in the Associations within the bounds of which they reside,—and also one delegate duly chosen for that purpose, from every orthodox Congregational church,—to attend the aforesaid *Convention, to be held in Michigan City, Indiana, commencing at 11 o'clock, A. M., on Thursday, the 30th of July next.*

The Congregational church of Michigan City, with their pastor, Rev. Erastus Colton, have desired the Committee to assure the ministers and delegates to the Convention of their earnest wish to greet them, and extend to them their hospitalities.

Michigan City is situated on Lake Michigan, forty miles from Chicago, and thirty miles from St. Joseph ; from which places it will be accessible daily, by steamboat. Persons from the East may take the route of the upper lakes to Chicago, or from Detroit across the peninsula, by the Central Railroad and stage-coach to St. Joseph ; or from Monroe or Toledo, by the Southern Railroad and stage-coach, direct to Michigan City.

L. SMITH HOBART,  
CHESTER HAMMOND,  
O. C. THOMPSON, } Committee.

*Union City, April 23, 1846.*

## MINUTES.

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In response to the preceding invitation, the Convention assembled at the time and place named, and was called to order by Rev. L. Smith Hobart, Chairman of the Committee.

Rev. Erastus Colton, minister of the church in Michigan city, was chosen Chairman for the purpose of organization, and Rev. L. Smith Hobart, Clerk.

Prayer was offered by the Chairman.

On motion, Rev. Messrs. O. C. Thompson and J. B. Walker, and Dr. J. D. Weston, were appointed a committee to prepare a Roll of members.

Rev. Messrs. Pierce, Langworthy, and Pearson, were appointed a committee to nominate officers for the Convention.

An adjournment was then taken till 2 o'clock, P. M.

### THURSDAY AFTERNOON.

The Convention assembled according to adjournment, and spent an hour in devotional exercises.

Rev. O. C. Thompson presented the report of the Committee to prepare the Roll, which was accepted and is as follows:—

IOWA.—Rev. Julius A. Reed, *Davenport*; Rev. Charles Burnham, *Brighton*; Rev. Alden B. Robbins, *Bloomington*.

WISCONSIN.—Rev. John J. Miter, Dr. J. D. Weston, *Milwaukee*.

MICHIGAN.—Rev. L. Smith Hobart, Thomas L. Acker, Esq., *Union City*; Rev. John D. Pierce, *Marshall*; Rev. John J. Bliss, *Litchfield*; Rev. G. L. Foster, Joseph E. Beebe, Esq., *Jackson*; Rev. George Barnum, *Leoni*; Rev. Thomas Jones, *Grass Lake*; Rev. Clark Lockwood, *Clinton*; Rev. E. H. Rice, *Lenawee*; Rev. H. L. Hammond, Hon. C. G. Hammond, *Detroit*; Rev. Orlo D. Hine, *Pontiac*; Rev. Orson Parker, *Flint*; Rev. O. C. Thompson, *St. Clair*.

ILLINOIS.—Rev. Jonathan Blanchard, *Galesburg*; Rev. N. C. Clark, W. R. Mann, Esq., *Elgin*; Rev. R. M. Pearson, *Grand Do-*

*Tour*; Rev. H. Brown, Eli Northum, Esq., *Naperville*; Rev. E. C. Birge, *Endor*; Rev. E. G. Howe, *Woodstock*; Rev. Joel Grant, *Lockport*: Rev. William Kirby, *Jacksonville*; Rev. James B. Walker, John Brooks, Esq., *Chicago*.

**INDIANA.**—Rev. Erastus Colton, Dea. E. Folsom, *Michigan City*: Rev. M. A. Jewett, L. H. Scott, Esq., *Terre Haute*; Rev. D. M. Bardwell, *Ontario*.

**OHIO.**—Rev. George Roberts, *Andover*; Rev. Thomas Tenney, *Austinburg*.

**NEW YORK.**—Rev. Pindar Field, *Oriskany Falls*; David Hale, Esq., *New York City*; Rev. Robert Laird, *Fowlerville*; Rev. Sydney Brown, *Cohocton*.

**CONNECTICUT.**—Rev. Charles S. Sherman, *New Britain*.

**MASSACHUSETTS.**—Rev. Parsons Cooke, *Lynn*; Rev. Isaac P. Langworthy, *Chelsea*.

**CANADA.**—Rev. James Nall, *Port Sarnia*; Rev. William Clarke, *Simcoe*.

Rev. J. D. Pierce of the Committee to nominate officers, presented their report, which was adopted, as follows:—

Rev. JOHN J. MITER, President.

Rev. I. P. LANGWORTHY, } Vice-Presidents.  
Rev. J. BLANCHARD, }

Rev. L. SMITH HOBART, } Secretaries.  
Hon. CHARLES G. HAMMOND, }

The following persons were appointed a committee to lay before the Convention such subjects for consideration as they should judge appropriate and within the terms of the call:—Rev. Messrs. Cooke, N. C. Clark, W. Clarke, Hammond, Burnham, Roberts, Laird, Dr. Weston, and Dea. Folsom.

Rev. Messrs. Colton, Kirby, Thompson, and Dea. Folsom were appointed a committee to arrange the Religious Exercises of the Convention.

Letters were read from Rev. Levi L. Fay and Prof. Henry N. Day of Ohio, and from Rev. J. Tassey of Pennsylvania, expressing their interest in the objects of the Convention, and regrets at their inability to be present.

The Committee on Religious Exercises reported in part, recommending that the first half hour of each morning and afternoon session be spent in devotional exercises, and that a sermon be

preached this evening by Rev. I. P. Langworthy. These recommendations were adopted.

The Committee to submit subjects for the consideration of the Convention, reported a series of topics—and recommended that each of them be referred to a committee. This was done as follows :—

To prepare a Narrative of the State of Religion in the churches, from such information as may be furnished by the members of the Convention :—Messrs. Langworthy, Jones, and Northum.

On the Adaptation of Congregationalism to the West :—Messrs. Pierce, Howe, and Scott.

On the Value of the Plan of Union :—Messrs. H. L. Hammond, Roberts, and Acker.

On the Duty of Congregationalists to sustain their Church Polity :—Messrs. Cooke, Barnum, and Mann.

On the Expediency of continuing to send delegates to the Presbyterian and Congregational Conventions, and of holding Annual Congregational Conventions :—Messrs. Hobart, Bardwell and Beebe.

To prepare a Statement of the Substance of the Confessions of Faith and Ecclesiastical Constitutions adopted by Western Congregational bodies :—Messrs. Field, Cooke, and Hine.

On the Causes, the Evils, and the Remedies of the practice of Congregational ministers abandoning their Church Polity on coming to the West :—Messrs. Thompson, Foster, and Brown.

On the Relations of the American Home Missionary Society to Congregational churches at the West :—Messrs. Blanchard, Jewett, and Weston.

After singing and prayer, the Convention adjourned till evening.

#### THURSDAY EVENING.

The Convention assembled at 8 o'clock, for public worship. An appropriate discourse was preached by Rev. I. P. Langworthy, from John 6 : 63.

The following resolution was then introduced, and made the subject of several spirited addresses.

*Whereas*, Upon invitation of the friends of Christ of the Congregational faith in Michigan, we have assembled from various portions of the United States, and Canada, to consult upon the means of establishing a more perfect bond of union among the real friends of Congregationalism, and of advancing the cause of truth and piety in all our borders :—therefore,

*Resolved*, That in the outset of our deliberations, we declare to the world our abiding adherence to the doctrines and principles of the gospel as held by the Puritan Fathers and our devotion to that form of Church Polity which we have received at their hands, and which is our rightful inheritance.

This was adopted ; prayer was offered, and the Convention adjourned till to-morrow morning.

#### FRIDAY MORNING.

The Convention met at 8 o'clock and spent half an hour in devotional exercises. The question of inviting Ministers present, who were not Congregationalists, to sit in the Convention as honorary members, was discussed and decided in the negative.

Rev. J. D. Pierce of the Committee to whom was referred the subject of the Adaptation of Congregationalism to the West, presented their report, which was read and laid upon the table.

Pres. Blanchard addressed the Convention on the claims of Knox College and introduced a resolution, which was laid upon the table.

Rev. Parsons Cooke of the Committee on the Duty of Congregationalists to sustain their Church Polity, presented their report, which was read and made the order of the day for 4, P. M.

The Convention then adjourned till afternoon.

#### FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

The Convention met at 2 o'clock, and spent a half hour in prayer and praise.

Pres. Blanchard presented the report of the Committee on the Relations of the American Home Missionary Society to the Congregational Churches at the West, in the form of resolutions, which were adopted as follows :—

*Resolved*, That this Convention is deeply impressed with the importance of the American Home Missionary Society, as a means of planting and sustaining gospel institutions in the West, and cordially commend it to the continued confidence of our churches.

*Resolved*, That the catholic spirit in which the affairs of that Society have been administered, is worthy of commendation ; and while in our judgment the Executive Committee should not forget that a vast majority of the funds placed at their disposal, are given by Congregational Christians ; and while they would recognize and act upon the principle that donors have a right to direct the application of their charities, we cannot recommend the withdrawal of aid from churches which have not the Congregational form of government.

*Resolved*, That as slaveholding is now commonly regarded and reprobated as sin, and as the Congregational form of government cannot be administered in churches composed of slaveholders and slaves, it is the judgment of this Convention that the American Home Missionary Society should plant or sustain no churches in slaveholding states, upon the principle of tolerating slaveholding in the members, but use all just efforts to extend a slavery-expelling gospel throughout our states.

The report presented by Rev. Mr. Pierce, was taken up, discussed and adopted as follows :--

#### Adaptation of Congregationalism to the West.

An alleged want of adaptedness to the peculiar circumstances of the western people, is an objection to Congregationalism, so confidently urged and so often repeated, that it has come to be believed by many. It meets us in every log cabin, and under every green tree. Skilfully wielded, it is capable of producing, and has produced, a mighty effect. Had it not been for this potent, all-pervading argument, Puritan institutions would, ere this, have predominated at the West.

But this objection, universal though it be, may be demonstrated to be groundless. Whether viewed in the light of observation and experience, or in the light of the sacred Scriptures, it carries upon its brow the stamp of falsehood. Its omnipresence and all-pervading character cannot change its nature.

If it were true—if it had its foundation in the reason and fitness of things, then we should be bound by it, and it would be our duty to dissolve and go home, and submit ourselves to lawful authority. But if it is not true—if it has no foundation in the reason and fitness of things, then the power that is attempted to be exercised is a usurpation, and we are not bound to submit to it; but it is our duty to do all within the compass of our ability to preserve the churches in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free.

Here we might rest, and call for the proof that Congregationalism is not adapted to the West. We have a right to the evidence proving the correctness of this position. From the earnestness and confidence with which this objection has been urged, the evidence ought to be clear, and clearly spread before the churches, for the reason that it involves our duty.

But we waive this right, and proceed to furnish evidence that no system ever devised, is so admirably adapted to promote the great end of the institution of the church, as the Congregational. If we fail to furnish evidence as clear as the sun in full meridian splendor, it will not be because such evidence does not exist.

Congregationalism bears the very impress of divine authority, and the stamp of divine wisdom, in its complete adaptedness to the end proposed. No system devised by man can compete with it; and it

may safely be affirmed, that it is not within the power of the human intellect to produce a system so perfect in its arrangements, and so fitted to secure the great end of human existence --the glory of God in the salvation of precious undying spirits.

What then is the great object of a church state? Is it not to fit men, as lively stones, for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Is it not to prepare sons and daughters for their final and everlasting home in the Paradise of God? The end proposed, in the institution of a church, is the instruction and edification of its members—their growth in knowledge and holiness, till they all come to the fullness of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

Hence that system of church polity which is best adapted to call into constant and vigorous exercise, all the powers and faculties of each member, and produce the greatest amount of fruit, must be the true one. In this regard, Congregationalism stands pre-eminent and without a rival. It calls into exercise the talents of every member, and furnishes employment to all. Each must stand in his lot and do his duty. The duties required demand high mental qualifications. To do reputably what is expected, each one seeks more or less diligently to attain those qualifications. This tends constantly and powerfully to cultivate the mind and mature the judgment.

No system can be imagined to be better adapted to keep alive the spirit of inquiry. Cases are constantly presenting themselves, which require investigation, both of the Scriptures and the past history of the church. These things can hardly fail to produce a great increase of knowledge and mental vigor in the church.

This is more than can be said of any other system. All other schemes of church order and government exclude the great body of believers from all participation in the administration of church affairs. They have nothing to do but to quiet and behave themselves, as children under tutors and governors. No other system treats believers in Christ as men capable of self-government.

But if the disciples of Christ, the called and chosen of God unto salvation, cannot govern themselves, under his direct legislation, and the guidance of his Spirit, then away with the cherished doctrine of this republic, that man has the right and is capable of self-government. On the assumption that the churches cannot govern themselves, this fundamental principle of all our institutions is the veriest delusion. Every other scheme is based on this assumption. Every other one declares in effect, that believers in Christ, called to be saints, the chosen and sanctified of God the Father, are incapable of governing themselves.

To say that Congregationalism is not adapted to the West, is not only saying in effect that it is not scripturally true, but it is saying what degrades the churches here, below the common standard of humanity—it is saying that our churches are composed of an inferior race of beings: for it is no longer a question to be determined

by experience, whether men are capable of governing themselves, both in church and state. The last two and a half centuries have settled that matter. There is no evading, no resisting the conclusion, if the institutions of our fathers are not adapted to the West, it is because the western people have become a degenerate people. And it is perfectly astonishing that the churches here should be willing to lie under an imputation so derogatory to their character for intelligence and common Christian discernment.

Every member has a right, and it is his duty, to be informed of all matters pertaining to the church, and to participate in all its affairs. But Congregationalism is the only system that requires this, and provides the means of such information and action. Paul would have all thoroughly acquainted with the business of the church. Though he suffers not women to teach and usurp authority in its government and discipline, yet he provides for their instruction, in case they wish to learn more than can be learned from witnessing its public transactions, "Let them ask their husbands at home." But of what avail, when their husbands are as ignorant as themselves? The direction is not right. It should have been—Let them go to the bishop, the priest, the circuit riders, or elders, as the case may be, and ask to be informed. In no system but the Congregational, can the direction of the apostle find a place, and under no other can it ever be followed or obeyed.

Another consideration of great weight is to be found in the fact, that the people of the West are exceedingly jealous of their rights and liberties. Any infringement of those rights, secured to them by the great charter of all our liberties, the gospel of Jesus Christ, produces jarring and discord, and strife for the mastery. Where there is an attempt to deprive individuals and communities of their sacred rights, there must and will be opposition. If resistance ceases for a time, it is for the purpose of gaining strength, to renew more successfully the contest. But the end is alienation of feeling and final separation. Those who are Congregational from a conviction that the system is founded in and supported by the Bible, can never be at home in any other communion, unless indeed they become indifferent and cease to be active Christians. Every other system throws them into the background, and furnishes them no employment. The most they can do is to let patience have her perfect work, and cultivate the grace of submission to the powers that be. Such a state of things is unnatural and undesirable. And there is no reason in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, why it should be so. Especially when it is considered, that a large proportion of professing Christians at the West are, and ever have been, Congregational in sentiment. Had it not been for this omnipresent libel—that "Congregationalism is not adapted to the West," nearly all the churches would have been, as in primitive times, parochial or Congregational.

True, the Plan of Union has contributed largely to produce the

present unhappy state of things. Had its results been foreseen, it could never have been adopted ; for it has proved itself a plan of disunion, and resulted in the subjection of all our churches to the control and government of another denomination, wherever it has been adopted. Such a state of things ought not to be tolerated. It produces constant uneasiness, and especially among a people so jealous of their rights, as the people of the West.

Here we cannot forbear remarking, that the churches at the West have been mainly planted and watered by the Congregational churches at the East. Their funds have been contributed, and their labors expended in founding Christian institutions, and rearing churches at the West—and why should not Congregationalism have the benefit thereof? It has been in this case, as it once was with Virgil. He wrote verses, but another stepped in and carried off the honors. So with them, they planted and watered, but others entered in and deprived them of their labor, and the churches of their dearest rights.

Besides, Congregationalism has a direct tendency to keep up a lively interest in all matters pertaining to the church ; and consequently a deep concern in each and every member for its peace and prosperity. This is more than can be said of any other system. Where all power is lodged in the hands of the few, and all the business of the church transacted by them, the great mass come in time to regard church affairs as matters of no concern to them ; and hence necessarily become more or less indifferent to its welfare. Questions involving the existence of the church may be under consideration by that few, and yet the many know nothing of it. They can do nothing to avert any threatened evil, or to promote the good of the church. But different indeed is the Congregational system. It requires of every member a full understanding of the real posture of affairs. The members often assemble to discuss matters of high concernment, and devise ways and means for the enlargement of the church. This cannot fail to keep up a lively interest and concern for its prosperity and usefulness.

Another consideration is the fact that Congregationalism tends to repress that love of power and lust of dominion, so common to man. The system necessarily leads the members to regard each other as brethren. No one can rightfully claim the pre-eminence, and lord it over God's heritage. The Lord Jesus, who knew what was in man, told his disciples that they should not exercise authority one over the other. But all other systems keep up the distinction between rulers and ruled, and tend greatly to cherish that love of power, which it was his purpose to repress.

Besides, Congregationalism has proved itself adapted to a new settlement. When the Pilgrims landed upon the rock of Plymouth, they were subject to no earthly power. They acknowledged allegiance to the Prince Immanuel, and to him alone, as Supreme Head of the church. The entire continent was then one wild waste. But

with Congregationalism in its purity, primitive simplicity and power, they laid broad and deep and permanent the foundations of all our institutions. The fundamental principle of their creed was—that men have the right and are capable of governing themselves, both in church and state. This principle did not originate at the time of the Revolution. The Declaration of American Independence is but an embodiment of the principles brought over in the Mayflower. Adams and Jefferson did not originate them—they copied them from the records of our Pilgrim fathers—they borrowed them from the constitution of the Congregational churches. They but adopted the great principles of the Puritan fathers—"that men are by nature possessed of a capacity to govern themselves, and have a right to do so ; that it is the birthright of all men to govern themselves under God, both in politics and religion ; to think and decide for themselves in these matters"—and built thereon the mighty fabric of this widely extended and ever growing republic.

No churches that ever existed, ever proved themselves to be more active, more efficient, more useful. Yet after an experiment of two hundred and fifty years, we are told that this same Congregationalism is not adapted to the new settlements of the West ! What a libel upon the history of the past, and upon all that is sacred in truth ! What churches in all the earth, since the primitive disciples fell asleep, have been more active in every good word and work ?

In what churches originated the great benevolent enterprises that distinguish the present age ? By what churches have they been mainly supported and carried forward ? Whence the origin of the American Board, that is sending the gospel to every part of the heathen world, and to the islands of the great deep, and with it a knowledge of civilization and free institutions ? Whence the origin of the Home Missionary Society, that is sending the gospel to the destitute places of our own land ? Whence the origin of the American Education Society, that is training up its hundreds of young men for the harvest of the world ? Whence the origin of the American Bible Society, that is publishing the Word of Life in all languages, among all tribes of men ? And whence the origin of other kindred institutions, designed to bless erring, dying men ?

And must we now be told, that Congregationalism has lost its power and efficiency for good ? Must we believe that it has become old, and feeble and decrepid, and fit only to be laid aside ? This cannot be ; for Congregationalism contains within itself, a living, vital energy—a principle of life, self-preservation and purity. It depends on no human arm for support. It looks to no earthly courts or judicatories to preserve it from error, and keep its garments unspotted. Perseverance unto the end, in the faithful discharge of every duty, in humble reliance on the Spirit of the living God, is the condition of its final triumph. Hence in efficiency no system can compare with it—if by efficiency is meant that system which is fitted to secure purity of life, and purity of doctrine, in the

intelligent and cordial co-operation of brethren in every good word and work ; and that too in accordance with the simple forms of the gospel. In confirmation of this, we might appeal to the history of the past. No doubt churches may become corrupt. But it must be allowed to be easier to corrupt the few, where all power is lodged in their hands, than the great mass of believers.

It was the living vital energy inherent in Congregationalism, that enabled the Eastern churches, after the full development of Unitarianism, to purge themselves of that error. It is believed that no other organization could have done it. Episcopacy has not purified itself of Puseyism. Presbyterianism, in Geneva, Ireland and England, has not succeeded in freeing itself of the Unitarian heresy. And the reason is—those that govern have become corrupt. On the other hand, the Congregational churches, of which there are about 2000 in England and Wales, and many in Ireland, are comparatively pure in doctrine and practice. Of the Congregational churches in Scotland, Chalmers says—"they form the purest body of Christians in the United Kingdom."

In those churches where all power remains in the brotherhood, there are less inducements for aspiring men, to seek admission for the purposes of personal aggrandizement and pre-eminence, than in those organizations where the power is lodged in the hands of the few. Hence in the Congregational churches, one of the principal sources of corruption and error is avoided.

We cannot forbear remarking in this connection, that it is not by means of any mere organization, however perfect—that it is not by the concentration of all power in the hands of a privileged few, that can preserve any church from the embrace of fatal error.

It is, and has proved itself to be, a vain reliance. Putting confidence in man, relying upon an arm of flesh, is wholly delusive. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Let the special influences of the Holy Ghost be withdrawn from any church and its history is soon written. "The habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Without those gracious influences, direct and continued, there is no safety. This dependence on man's wisdom and power, however concentrated, must be exceedingly displeasing to the Spirit of the living God ; for without him, all else is vain.

While fully persuaded of this, we say also, that those ordinances which he has appointed, are to be religiously observed ; and those institutions which he has directed, the pattern whereof he has left us upon record, are to be perpetuated, as a means of securing the desired end. But even those simple elements of power, which he has prescribed, are not to be relied upon, aside from his blessing. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it ; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

The great achievement of the Puritans was the re-establishment

of the primitive form of church order and government. When the Pilgrim fathers were driven from their homes, the whole earth, both in church and state, was groaning under a weight of tyranny and oppression, that human nature could no longer endure. Being freed, on reaching this then wilderness, from all the shackles of civil and ecclesiastical power, they made the Bible their Constitution and Code of laws. Hence the churches they formed were purely Congregational, as in the apostolic age. They went back to the principle laid down in the beginning—*One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren*; and accordingly they retained all power in the churches, where Christ and the apostles left it. In this, they achieved a victory of untold importance; and like the little leaven, hid in three measures of meal, it will yet be felt in its benign influences, till the whole earth is renewed, sanctified and saved.

The churches which they planted, have been perpetuated, and are the glory of the land. We wish to see those institutions which blessed them, and blessed their children, established at the West— institutions which subject men and their families to the laws of God—to the authority of the Bible, and not to the enactments of men. We wish to see Congregationalism, in all its purity, simplicity, and living vital energies prevail, that the West may do, less than a century hence, what the East is now doing—pour forth streams to make glad the city of our God. If the great principles on which the Pilgrim fathers reared their institutions, were true then, they are true now. If they were adapted to the East in its infancy, they are equally adapted to the West now.

The report presented by Rev. Mr. Cooke, was taken from the table and after discussion, adopted as follows:—

**The Duty of Congregationalists to Sustain their own Church Polity  
in the West.**

No proofs can add to the conviction which every well-balanced mind has, that it is the duty of every Christian to sustain his own principles, provided they be right principles. And that this rule binds in the church's labor of self-propagation, can hardly be questioned. It is a law of our spiritual nature, that binds the church to propagate her kind, and not to seek a strange or mixed race. Whatever we may do in special cases, we may not base our general policy of church extension on the assumption that another's principles are better than our own.

But many, perhaps most of the persons who co-operate with us, suppose, without having examined the subject, that our churches *are* propagating their kind, at least as a general result. But one or two facts will show that this is a mistake. Take Western and Central New York as a sample. The germs of our churches there were mostly Congregational, both in the people that composed them and

by their organization ; but the Plan of Union came in, and now, the strength and main substance of the churches in that whole region are essentially Presbyterian. Though they drew their life-blood from New England, their ministry is most active and zealous to bring and to keep all under Presbyterian rule ; and the few churches, scattered and feeble, that are laboring there to uphold our principles, feel from the Presbyterian body an influence most undesirable and disheartening. Does this state of things show, that we have been for the last fifty years effectually laboring to sustain our own principles?

Take next the churches on the Western Reserve. There too was planted a noble vine wholly a right seed. In the beginning of their plantation they were homogeneous, and organized after the New England model, and by Congregational ministers. But now they are in a transition state—for obvious reasons called Congregational, yet in the most important particulars Presbyterian. Their ministers are connected with Presbytery, and so are *actual* Presbyterians. The records of all the acts of the churches are sent up to the Presbytery for review, and to be modified according to the order of Presbytery. The Presbytery allows no Congregational church to be organized by its members, except such as will come into a connexion with it. All the churches are reported, on the minute of the General Assembly, as Presbyterian churches. After all that Congregationalists have done in Ohio, they have there but a score or two of churches not absorbed by Presbytery ; while the two Presbyterian branches together number 500 or 600. It is then beyond question, that we are not doing justice to our own principles, while we work a scheme which, by so wholesale an operation, transfers the results to another system.

Some of the reasons why we ought to sustain our own institutions, are the following :

1. All experience has shown, that *none others are more worthy of our support*. For every purpose for which a church exists—whether it be the promotion of enlightened and active piety, the diffusion of intelligent character through the mass of the people, the development of the religious energies of the people, the securing of an elevated and efficient ministry, and giving support to all Christian and humane institutions, the promotion of orderly and harmonious intercourse among Christian men, efficiency in propagating the gospel at home and abroad—experience has placed this system in a rank second to no other. We have room for comparison only in one particular. Our Congregational churches in this country for the last year, according to their number and ability, did for enterprises of Christian benevolence, *nearly double* of what was done by any branch of the Presbyterian church. Of the whole receipts of the Home Missionary Society, *two thirds* came from Congregational churches ; and not a little of the rest came from persons whose benevolent character had been formed in such churches.

The late report of the Board of Missions of the Old School Presbyterian church, shows that one half of all the churches connected with that body contributed absolutely *nothing*; and the contributions from the other half came from a few individuals in each church; so that the official reports demonstrate, that the great mass of the members of that church have done nothing to promote the missionary work. Now, though as Congregationalists we are far from having cause of boasting in this matter, since our own churches are doing far less than they ought, we may not overlook the fact, so glaring and so instructive, as that of the contrast in this particular between the habits of benevolent action in our churches and those in Presbyterian churches. With us, the church members who gave nothing for the missionary cause are but a small fraction of the whole. But if the Congregational system bears fruit in such proportion beyond the Presbyterian, (the best of all other systems,) is it not important that its energies should have a direction to propagate its kind in preference to some less vigorous progeny? It is a question of deep interest as affecting the cause of Christ, whether the thousands of churches that are to come up on the bosom of the West, shall be richly endowed with those attributes of benevolence, which shall make them efficient in the great work of the world's conversion. If we will convert the West, to get its aid in the conversion of the world, we must plant the most world-converting churches there.

2. In the second place, our system should be allowed to beget children in its own likeness, because *it has peculiar adaptedness to the wants of the new settlements, and to the occasions of the work of Home Missions*—the work by which this rapidly extending nation must stand or fall. We know how current, and yet how false, has been the contrary assertion. We know that there has been one cause, comprehensive and active, to render our system unfit for the West—that is, the determination of a large portion of the ministry and eldership of the Presbyterian and mixed churches, in the use, to say the least, of all honorable and Christian expedients, to exclude it. And the fact that it has even a name to live, after so much being done to put it down, is in itself a proof of its wonderful vitality. The free, democratic system might naturally be supposed to be the best of all suited to the genius of the new states, where even the faults of men are upon the side of freedom. But poor as has been its chance to show its adaptedness to the West, facts enough exist to spoil that stereotyped song—“THOUGH JUST THE THING FOR NEW ENGLAND, IT WILL NOT DO FOR THE WEST.” It has in fact done for the West what many have found it convenient to forget. It did the work of laying the foundations, yea, the most difficult part of the missionary work in Western and Central New York and in the Western Reserve. It labored there with as great success in sowing the seeds, as the other system has since labored in securing the harvest; and but for its work of pioneering, the present condition of

the churches there might have been far behind what it is. And since attempts have been made to rear churches independent of Presbytery, in the districts farther west, no difficulties have been felt for want of an eldership or standing judicatories. It has been found that, with the exception of a few persons having special talents for ruling, (which talents our system does not so well provide for,) the emigrants from New England are quite as well pleased with the institutions under which they were reared; and that men otherwise educated are not always incapable of seeing its adaptedness to their wants. We have now in the West, for the first time since the Plan of Union went into full operation, a large number of infant, un-mixed Congregational churches. Nor are they altogether like the dwellings of the Egyptians, enveloped in darkness, while the light of heaven shines only upon their neighbors. Yea, the facts are now at hand, to put to silence the disparaging pretence to which we have alluded. And if there were no other reason, the superior—we speak advisedly—the *superior* adaptedness of our system to the genius of the Western people, is reason enough why we should build on our own foundations.

3. We should do it, in the third place, as *the best means of counter-acting sectarian and corrupting influences*, and especially those of Perfectionism. The advocates of this error go into churches composed chiefly of emigrants from New England, who have been trained to love the name of Congregationalism, but who have been sent off under Presbyterian institutions; and they take advantage of the charm there is in the name, to lead off the unwary to the embrace of corrupt doctrine. They offer a spurious Congregationalism, covering poisonous doctrine, to persons more difficult to be weaned from New England names than they are discerning of sound doctrine, and so make many proselytes. This has been the principal instrument by which these men have done so much mischief. It is our decided conviction, sustained by clusters of facts, that perfectionism at the West is more indebted to the Plan of Union than to any other cause. If we had built Congregational instead of mixed churches, the evil, which has now become the greatest scourge of our Western Zion, would scarcely have had existence. And now, that it spread no further, it becomes us as far as may be, to retrieve our position and take from the disturber of our peace his most efficient weapon.

But this reason for building New England institutions and acting in concurrence with Eastern predilections, has a wider range. There are many among the masses of emigrants, forced by circumstances into the Presbyterian church, who cannot so transfer their attachments as to feel at home; and these, unless rooted and grounded in the truth, are, from feeling themselves to be strangers, liable to be carried away by strangers. The cord which bound them to our system as to a father's house, has been sundered. The mother that comes in to claim their filial regards, is but a step-

mother ; and though she often repeats in her nursery song that she is the real mother, or as near to it as one can be, in so strange a country, where the real mother would have no chance to live, she carries certain features which the poor child can never recognize nor love. Multitudes are in this way prepared to feel, that since they must bury their mother and follow some stranger, they may at least have their choice among strangers, and this choice carries some under the feigned apostolic succession and the holy droppings from a prelate's fingers, and some under the Methodist despotism, and some into the defiled waters of a Campbellite baptism. Yea, the active and multiplied agencies of corrupt and corrupting sects at the West, make it immensely important that we give to the children of the East, the institutions which shall attract them by the cords that bind them to their home.

4. A fourth reason is found in *the desirableness of keeping alive and active the sympathy between the churches East and West.* The mother wants to see her own image reflected in her daughter. Let her see naught but the face of a stranger, and she will learn to repudiate her own progeny. There is, and ever must be, less sympathy between churches of different than churches of the same denomination. Presbyterian churches, though reared by the aid of Congregational churches, very soon learn to say and do many things against our institutions, which show them to be unnatural children of those churches. This begets coldness and irritation—the sympathy that should exist is destroyed—and the united strength of the two is far less than it otherwise would have been. This loss of power for speeding the car of salvation westward, is already manifest, and will reveal itself more and more as long as the Eastern churches aid here to multiply a strange progeny. In order to save and accumulate her utmost strength for overspreading the West with Christian influence, New England must ever be re-producing herself—rearing a church that is homogeneous, yea, identical with her own ; one with her in body and in spirit.

The way in which she ought to be re-producing herself, is seen in the way in which the churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut did it, in Vermont and Maine. There no plans of union hindered, and the two younger States nobly reflected the image of the elder ; and our churches there, are coming to exert just the proportion of influence over the mass, that the mother churches have exerted. But New York, Western and Central, equally indebted to those States for planting and cultivation, is far from being a re-production of New England. It has outward and physical advantages beyond Vermont and Maine ; but its Presbyterian churches are exerting nothing like the proportion of influence exerted by our churches in Vermont, and nothing like what they would have exerted if they had been allowed to remain as they were first planted, identical with the New England body. Thus it will be seen how important it is for

the efficiency of our churches, in the production of the highest good, that we build on our own foundations.

5. Still another reason is, that *fidelity to our views of the teaching of Scripture requires it of us.* It is the foundation principle of our system, that we may not build on notions of mere expediency, nor teach for doctrines the commandments of men. We hold ourselves bound to have no cardinal principle of ecclesiastical regimen, which has not a warrant in the Word of God. And if we are bound to practice according to this principle, we are bound to promote the same practice in others. But the Presbyterian churches that we build, in so far as they differ from us, make out their difference, from an assumption of expediency. Few of them have a face to pretend that the eldership (ruling the church exclusive of the vote of the brotherhood,) and their standing judicatories have a Scripture warrant. Dr. Stowe, the Corypheus of western Presbyterianism, stated at the Detroit Convention, that Congregationalism was more accordant with Scripture, and mixed Presbyterianism best adapted to efficiency in the West. But if our system be one of God's planning, God will answer for its efficiency, both East and West. God has framed the gospel, and interframed with it the larger timbers of an ecclesiastical fabric, and left the whole in the best shape to meet the wants of the whole world; and his authority binds us to carry this gospel, just as it is, and give it to every creature.

But it is said, that if we insist on acting out our principles, we shall be found laying too much stress on a matter of church government, and carry the mind away from the more substantial things. And this suggestion has had great influence to prevent our churches from doing justice to themselves, and to secure a chance for zealous Presbyterians to adjust this mere matter of church government, much in their own way—to tithe mint, annis and cummin, to their own polity. But the truth is, principles of church polity are important enough to have been defined and guarded in the Word of God. He has given us the charter of our freedom, and the methods of preserving orderly action, without coming under bondage. And he has commanded us to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Yea, our use of the principles of church polity stands intimately connected with our development of doctrinal and practical godliness. Strictly speaking, Puritanism on the one hand, and Puseyism on the other, are matters of church polity, "mere matters of church government." Yet in the train of consequences that each draws after it, they are questions of life and death to godliness. Our Puritan fathers might, with equal justice, be said to have been laboring for a mere matter of church polity; and the same reasoning that would hinder our standing by our own principles now, would condemn their going to death for the same. Besides, we have shown that the vigor of our evangelical action is vastly better sustained in the Congregational, than in the Presbyterian churches.

But we are told that Congregationalism is an excellent thing, if

you do not make an *ism* of it, which means if we understand it—if you do not defend and promote it. This is equivalent to saying, that free principles are all very well, if you leave them free to all encroachments of those interested to impose a bondage upon us.

Another tells us that the genius of Congregationalism is opposed to sectarianism, and that separate action is a departure from our principles, in that it engenders the spirit of a sect. True, our church polity is as a coat hanging loosely and freely upon us, leaving every joint and limb free to do its proper work. And if we employ ourselves in lacing and confining ourselves with this coat, and drawing it close upon us, we make it like those of other sects. But if while others are endeavoring to lace and confine us with the cords of a system foreign to us, we exert our strength to remove the bonds, and keep our freedom unimpaired, who can say that we violate the spirit of our system? Who shall say that a needful jealousy of liberty and effort to sustain it, violate the spirit of liberty? And who can say that there are now no occasions for such jealousy and effort.

The Committee on Religious Exercises recommended that Rev. Calvin Clark, the Agent of the American Home Missionary Society for Michigan, being present, be invited to preach this evening. By vote the Committee were instructed to invite him.

The Business Committee reported the following resolution in relation to Slavery, which was adopted :

*Whereas*, There is a natural antagonism between our principles and slaveholding—by reason of which we have next to no churches in the slave States—and our denomination differs from every other of the larger branches of the church in the land, in that her principles and the providence of God have kept her so clear from this sin of slaveholding ;—therefore,

*Resolved*, That the spread of genuine Congregationalism in our country is highly desirable as an effectual method of promoting the work of emancipation.

The Convention then adjourned till evening.

#### FRIDAY EVENING.

The Convention assembled at 8 o'clock for public worship. A sermon was preached by Rev. C. Clark, from Psalms 102:13—“For the time to favor Zion, yea, the set time, is come ;” after which the Convention adjourned till to-morrow morning.

SATURDAY, August 1st.

The Convention assembled at 8 o'clock, and spent a half hour in prayer and conference, having particular reference to the question, Why are not the influences of the Spirit of God witnessed in our churches as in days past?

After reading, correcting and approving the minutes, Rev. Mr. Hammond of the Committee on the Value of the Plan of Union of 1801, read their report which was made the order for half-past two o'clock, P. M.

The roll was then called and each member of the Convention was invited to give such information as he could, in regard to the state of religion in the communities with which he was acquainted. The time of each speaker was limited to five minutes, and more than three hours were thus occupied.

The Business Committee made a further report of subjects for the consideration and action of the Convention, and the same was adopted.

The Convention then adjourned till afternoon.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

At 2 o'clock the Convention met again, and spent the usual half hour in devotional exercises.

The report on the Plan of Union was then taken up and discussed, after which it was recommitted. The Committee was enlarged by the addition of Messrs. Cooke, Hale and Langworthy—with instruction to omit all recommendation of any specific plan of Union.

Rev. O. C. Thompson presented the report of the Committee on the Causes, the Evils and the Remedies of the practice of Congregational Ministers Abandoning their Church Polity on coming to the West. The report was read and approved, and is as follows:—

**Abandonment of their Church Polity by Ministers.**

The Committee to whom was referred the above subject, would report—That they have felt it their duty to inquire, first, whether such a fact as is here implied, exists; and alas, the evidence of its real existence is seen in almost every part of this great West. Ministers who have grown gray in the service of their Lord, in the defence of the simplicity of the gospel in the land of Congregationalism, on coming West, have departed from that simplicity and joined themselves to another order, where another system of church polity is embraced and taught. Even the honored Doctors of Divinity

have set the example, which example has been followed by multitudes of young ministers from all the schools of the prophets in the land of the Pilgrims. A very short residence in many parts of the West, furnishes abundant proof of the facts here stated. Whole Presbyteries are made up of those ministers who were once Congregational—and that too, where the majority and sometimes every one of their churches are of the Congregational order, drawn into their connection on the Plan of Union of 1801. On the Western Reserve, where the churches are made up almost exclusively of ministers and members from New England, there are 98 churches with 6801 members, which compose the Presbyteries of that region. Of these, only 14 churches with 1906 members, are strictly Presbyterian. Thus 14 Presbyterian Churches and 84 Congregational Churches make up the Presbyterianism of the New Connecticut of the West. These churches have been promised the full exercise of their choice in church connection, and many of them are from time to time, asking for the fulfilment of this promise, but for the sake of peace, continue the connection with Presbyteries; so that only 22 Congregational churches, except those connected with the Western Reserve Association now exist. Similar facts exist all over the West, showing that Congregationalism is more in favor with the people than with the ministers, the reasons for which, it does not perhaps become us to assign.

Among the causes of this change of ecclesiastical connection, we do in all charity believe, we are bound to believe, is a desire to do good and to advance the cause of our glorious God and Redeemer. Far be it from this Convention to impute sin, intentional and known, to all those who allow themselves to be subject to this charge. In many places where the Presbyterian order was first established, (and it does not become us to show how this form of church polity came to have the precedence in time. We remark, however, that the Plan of Union of 1801 has, in our opinion, done much to produce this,) the ministers find themselves located in the vicinity of Presbyterians, and, feeling the great importance of ecclesiastical connection, and especially here at the West, where a great class of vexed questions are continually arising, and no Congregational Association at hand, go into the Presbytery where there is power, or to say the least, the appearance of it. And this power which arises from worldly expediency, pleases the mind of even the good man of God, and when it is attained and exercised, it produces an effect similar to that produced on the mind by the possession of wealth, leading its possessor rather to desire more, than to part with what he has; and hence few who thus depart, ever return to the good old ways of our fathers. We feel bound to remark, however, that in our view, there is really more power in the simplicity of Congregationalism, than in any hierarchy on the earth, or in any position which is an approach towards hierarchy; for our best and only weapons are not carnal, nor sharpened by carnal principles. Had

there existed an Association in the neighborhood on the arrival of these Congregational ministers from the East, or had they waited till such an Association could have been formed, they would in all probability have gone into it without hesitation, and loved the connection at the West, as they did the same connection at the East ; and it is now well proved that this excellent form of church polity grows as healthfully on the rich prairies and woodlands of the West, as it does on the hills of New England, when once the proper culture is given to it.

On the subject of the evils arising from the abandonment of the system of Congregationalism by ministers coming West, we remark, that in our opinion it is subverting the purest and most scriptural form of church government that is to be found on the face of the earth. That it is of great importance to maintain this form of church government, we need not affirm, nor need we say that it is particularly important at the present time. It is most manifestly the best ground on which to meet the loud claims of high churchism in any of its forms. When the New England Congregational minister comes West, if he abandons the system of church government to which he belongs, he says, or is understood to say, that there is no importance in the Congregational principles as a system of government in the church ; and thus if he believes that the Bible teaches anything on this subject, he believes that it teaches that which is unimportant. The evil of such an influence is greater, far greater, than the good to be secured by any measure of expediency which can be adopted, if indeed we are at liberty to adopt measures of expediency where we have the teachings of the Spirit. For the minister to abandon this system, is to throw obstacles in the way of the most extensive information in the individual members of the church ; for it is easily shown that under no form of church government are there such incentives to understand the principles of the church set forth in the Scriptures, as are found in the Congregational order, where responsibility is rolled upon the brotherhood, in whom all ecclesiastical power resides, and by whom it is appropriately exercised. It is this principle in the churches of New England, that has raised that land to such an eminence in the civil and religious world, and diffused intelligence so generally among the people. The opposite principle is to encourage the few to think and to act for the many, and to teach the many to believe not only that they are not capable of thinking and acting for themselves, but to discourage them from an attempt to rise to this intelligence. Let the New England minister then, before he concludes to abandon the church polity which he has embraced and taught, ask himself whether he would bring into the West the intelligence of his mother country on all those great questions that made her what she is, and how he can best attain this desirable end ; and we believe that he will not abandon his own church and go elsewhere to accomplish this object. This intelligence prepares the way for both higher attainments in piety, and also a

higher amount of influence and usefulness in the church of God on the earth.

But it is more easy to see the evil, than it is to prescribe the remedy. The fault we believe, is not entirely at the West, and a remedy applied here, could never effectually remove the evil. Were our fathers and brethren in New England to enjoin it upon those ministers who come out to this good land, to be faithful and steadfast in their principles of church polity: were our Eastern Theological Seminaries to teach these principles more thoroughly to their pupils, a great and important remedy would be applied. Let it be well understood, that the Bible is "*our book*," or is "*the book*" on church government and discipline; that it teaches all which it is important for us to know on this subject, and that it contains all the authority which there is for us to obey, and with these principles as with a sling and stone we may go forth and meet the Goliath of the earth, and expect that the Lord of hosts will go with us.

The following resolution was submitted by the Business Committee:

*Resolved*, That the extension of Congregationalism in the West, has been seriously hindered by the opposing influence of some of the Agents of the American Home Missionary Society, who are zealous partisans of a different church polity.

After a very spirited and somewhat extended discussion, this resolution was indefinitely postponed,—in the belief that the end sought by its introduction would be attained without further action.

See notes of the discussion in the Appendix.

Rev. Mr. Hobart, from the Committee to whom was referred the question of the Expediency of Congregationalists continuing to send Delegates to the Presbyterian and Congregational Conventions,—of which one is to be held next year in Chicago,—and also, of holding an Annual Congregational Convention, submitted the following report, which was adopted :

**Representation in the Presbyterian and Congregational Conventions, &c.**

We cannot recommend the holding of *Annual* Conventions like the present, because in the first place, we do not think they will be needed. The reasons which have convened us *here* are peculiar. For the *ordinary* wants of the churches, our state, territorial, and provincial annual meetings, already established, are entirely sufficient. Whenever there shall *again* arise special and important reasons for another Congregational Convention, let it be called by some one of the annual Associations.

We are further of opinion, that an Annual Convention gathered from so extensive a region of country, within which there already exist numerous state and territorial ecclesiastical organizations—would be somewhat *uncongregational* in its aspect, besides being greatly liable to become, not so much a fountain of wise and judicious advice, as an engine for unauthorized and dangerous control.

In regard to the sending of delegates from our local Congregational organizations, to the Presbyterian and Congregational Conventions, we think it probable that the opportunity to do so will not much longer exist. The return to annual meetings by the New School General Assembly, will, we apprehend, put an end to the Conventions. But should they continue, the Committee are of opinion that it would be inexpedient for Congregationalists to seek a representation in them. If those which have already been held, have been useful, we greatly doubt whether they will continue to be so in future. We think moreover, that in the present posture of affairs, as between these two denominations, the preponderance of the Presbyterian influence in those assemblies, is too great to allow of their being of equal interest or advantage to Congregationalists.

The Committee on Religious Exercises reported their arrangement of services for this evening, and also for the Sabbath, and the same was approved.

The Convention then adjourned till evening.

#### SATURDAY EVENING.

The Convention assembled at 8 o'clock for public worship. The sermon was preached by Rev. Charles S. Sherman, from Luke 15 : 10. "There is joy in the presence of God, over one sinner that repenteth."

At the close of this service, the following resolution reported by the Business Committee, was considered and adopted :—

*Whereas*, The keeping of a Sabbath of rest and religious worship, required by the fourth command of the Decalogue, and enforced by the example of Christ and his disciples, is fundamental to the Christian system ; therefore,

*Resolved*, That this Convention enters its public testimony against all violations of the Christian Sabbath, and warns all our churches against all those forms of business, travel, visiting or recreation by which the rest of the day is broken and its end defeated.

Messrs. Cooke, N. C. Clark, and H. L. Hammond, were appointed a Committee to report what arrangements it may be expe-

dient to make with a view to the celebration of the Bi-centennial of the completion of the Cambridge Platform.

The Convention then adjourned until Monday morning at eight o'clock.

#### THE SABBATH.

Services were conducted this day in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee on Religious Exercises, as follows:—

Rev. G. L. Foster preached in the Congregational Church at 10½ A. M. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered at 3 P. M., by Rev. J. J. Miter and Rev. P. Cooke,—and Rev. H. L. Hammond preached in the evening, from Luke 16 : 26.

By invitation of the minister, Rev. R. Laird, preached in the Methodist church, in the morning, and Rev. W. Clarke in the evening.

MONDAY, AUG. 3d.

The Convention assembled at 8 o'clock, A. M., and spent a half hour in social worship, after which the minutes were read and approved.

The report of the Committee on the Plan of Union of 1801, which had been recommitted, was presented and adopted, as follows:—

#### Value of the Plan of Union.

The Committee appointed to report on the Value of the Plan of Union of 1801, would present the following:

Your Committee are deeply sensible that a task of great importance and difficulty has been assigned them. The attempt to calculate the value of the Plan of Union of 1801, will, by many persons out of this Convention, be deemed daring presumption—will be regarded as revolutionary and dangerous, like the efforts of some politicians to calculate the value of another Union—will especially be branded as an irreverent undervaluing of the wisdom of our fathers. Nor are we at all confident that we can fully meet the views of all the members of this Convention or of the Congregational churches they represent. The sound of the word "*Union*" has a magical influence, which inclines many to commend without careful examination, any plan which proposes to promote it. To such, the views we shall present, may not at once commend themselves. We believe also, that the subject is secondary in importance to none that have occupied your attention. We approach it therefore, with no little anxiety. The Plan alluded to, reads as follows:

" REGULATIONS adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and by the General Association of the State of Connecticut, (provided said Association agree to them,) with a view to prevent alienation, and promote union and harmony, in those new settlements which are composed of inhabitants from these bodies.

" 1st. It is strictly enjoined on all their missionaries to the new settlements, to endeavor by all proper means, to promote mutual forbearance and accommodation between those inhabitants of the new settlements who hold the Presbyterian and those who hold the Congregational form of church government.

" 2d. If in the new settlements, any church of the Congregational order shall settle a minister of the Presbyterian order, that church may, if they choose, still conduct their discipline according to Congregational principles, settling their difficulties among themselves, or by a Council mutually agreed upon for that purpose. But if any difficulty shall exist between the minister and the church or any member of it, it shall be referred to the Presbytery to which the minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; if not, to a Council consisting of an equal number of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, agreed upon by both parties.

" 3d. If a Presbyterian church shall settle a minister of Congregational principles, that church may still conduct their discipline according to Presbyterian principles; excepting that if a difficulty arise between him and his church or any member of it, the cause shall be tried by the Association to which the minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; otherwise by a Council, one half Congregationalists and the other half Presbyterians, mutually agreed on by the parties.

" 4th. If any congregation consist partly of those who hold the Congregational form of discipline, and partly of those who hold the Presbyterian form, we recommend to both parties, that this be no obstruction to their uniting in one church and settling a minister; and that in this case, the church choose a standing committee from the communicants of said church, whose business it shall be, to call to account every member of the church who shall conduct himself inconsistently with the law of Christianity, and to give judgment on such conduct; and if the person condemned by their judgment be a Presbyterian, he shall have liberty to appeal to the Presbytery; if a Congregationalist, he shall have liberty to appeal to the body of the male communicants of the church. In the former case the determination of the Presbytery shall be final, unless the church consent to further appeal to the Synod or to the General Assembly; and in the latter case, if the party condemned shall wish for a trial by a mutual Council, the cause shall be referred to such a Council. And provided the said standing committee of any church shall depute one of themselves to attend the Presbytery, he may have the

same right to sit and act in the Presbytery, as a ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church."

The motives of those who devised this Plan, it is not our province to discuss. We doubt not they were of the most praiseworthy character. Nor will we detain you with the historical details connected with its invention and adoption. Our business is with the Plan and the consequences that have resulted from its adoption.

In the estimation of your Committee, there are three classes of objections to this Plan :

I. There are objectionable principles contained in the Document itself.

II. The current constructions of the Plan by one of the parties, are still less satisfactory.

III. The results of the Plan have been unhappy.

Of the *First Class*, we name the following :

1. A general objection to Congregationalists entering into a partnership with a system of Church Polity so much opposed to Congregationalism—a system which vests the government of a church in a bench of elders who are not amenable to their constituents—which tends to foster an ambitious power-coveting spirit. In all unions with such systems, there is great probability that the power-grasping system will obtain an undue advantage. The results of business partnerships between parties of a similar character, are almost uniformly unfavorable to the less ambitious partner.

2. The Plan of Union of 1801, robs the Congregationalist in one instance, of a fundamental right, in directing that when accused, he shall be tried *first*, by a virtual Session, and not by the brethren of the church. The Standing Committee (Article 4,) are empowered and obligated to call to account the supposed offender, and give judgment on him before the case can be submitted to his brethren in the church. Thus is he brought to the only tribunal whose authority he can regard as scriptural, with a presumption against him, viz : That he has been previously condemned by the Committee. This is certainly a just ground of complaint.

3. This plan is not sufficiently definite. It leaves many questions wholly unsettled that need to be settled to secure permanent peace. Thus it has become liable to

The *Second Class* of objections—those found in the construction of the Plan by one of the parties—of which we mention the following :

1. The construction, that a Congregational church according to this compact, "*belongs to the Presbytery on the Accommodation Plan.*" No such language is found in the Document, and no such idea, either expressly or by implication. The 2d Article alludes to a Congregational church, that has a Presbyterian pastor. What relation do they sustain to Presbytery? No other according to this Plan, than this—if the church or any of its members should have a difficulty with the pastor, it shall be referred to the Presbytery, pro-

vided both parties agree to it. If not it must be referred to a Council composed of an equal number of Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Plainly such a church in no sense *belongs* to Presbytery. They need not, unless some difficulty occur with their pastor, pay the least attention to Presbytery from one generation to another; nor even in case of difficulty, unless they choose. They can call a Council without the least reference to the existence of such a body as the Presbytery, provided one half the members of that Council are Presbyterians. Evidently, the church may continue to belong to a Congregational body if they choose—may govern themselves without a Standing Committee, and in all ordinary cases of discipline, may call advisory Councils of Congregationalists exclusively; and for aught that appears, the framers of the Plan anticipated that they would do so. The only exception is, the case that has been specified—the case of difficulty with the pastor—at no other time are they obligated even to think of the Presbytery. Nor then *must* they do anything more than to look up Presbyterians enough to compose half their Council.

Article 4th, alludes to a church which contains a mixture of Congregationalists and Presbyterians, but says nothing of *such* a church being *connected* with Presbytery or *under the care* of Presbytery. They need have nothing to do with Presbytery, unless some Presbyterian offender shall appeal from the decision of the Standing Committee. In that case, they must appear before Presbytery, defend themselves, and abide by the decision. Besides this, the Standing Committee are permitted, if they choose, to send one of their number to Presbytery, where he may have an equal right to sit and act as though he were a ruling elder. But the Standing Committee are under no *obligation* to send a delegate to Presbytery; nor if they do, are the church, especially the Congregational portion of them, bound by the action of this Committee-man. For aught that appears, this church may still be connected with a Congregational body, or even remain independent if they choose.

It seems then, that this Plan does not require that any church not wholly Presbyterian, shall ever *belong* to Presbytery; nothing but a false construction of it imposes any such obligation.

2. Another construction involved in the former, is, that a Congregational church, if on the Plan of Union, must send up not only its delegates regularly, but its records also to Presbytery, to be reviewed and approved or condemned; and even its statistics, to swell the number of Presbyterians; so that they must actually give their whole influence to the support of the Presbyterian Polity. There is nothing at all of this in the Plan, nor do we believe such a result was anticipated by its authors.

3. Another construction is that such a church must ask the consent of Presbytery to call or dismiss a pastor. Of this the Plan says nothing.

4. Another construction is that a member dissatisfied with the

judgment of the Committee, though a Congregationalist, must nevertheless as a matter of course, appeal to Presbytery, though the Plan allows him to appeal to a Congregational Council regardless of Presbytery, because as it is said "the church *belongs* to the Presbytery on the Accommodation Plan."

5. Another construction extensively made by one of the parties is, that the existence of purely Congregational bodies in the Western States, and the union of purely Congregational churches with these bodies, rather than with Presbyteries, is a violation of the compact. That this is a construction not contemplated in the Plan, see article 3d, which assumes that the Congregational pastor of a Presbyterian church will still be connected with an Association, thus assuming the co-existence of Presbyteries and Associations on the same ground. Why then should such churches and such bodies be accused, as they have so often been, of fostering sectarian jealousies, unfurling rival banners, and opposing the Plan of Union?

6. Another construction is that there is an "*organic difference*" between a Congregational church on the Accommodation Plan and one not on that Plan, so that the action of a majority of the church in withdrawing from Presbytery is considered a secession from the church.\*

The *Third Class* of objections is found in its practical operations.

1. It has failed "to prevent alienation and to promote peace and harmony.

(1.) Its first introduction into some of the Congregational regions produced great excitement and disturbance, and caused alienations and divisions that were not healed for years. This was especially the fact in Western New York.

(2.) It has involved purely Congregational bodies in the exciting and disastrous controversies of the Presbyterian General Assembly, to their great disturbance and injury.

(3.) According to the testimony of distinguished advocates of that Plan, it was the means of rending the veil of the Presbyterian Temple from the top to the bottom.

(4.) Very extensive dissatisfaction with the Plan now exists throughout the whole country.

2. It has worked unfairly for the parties.

The authors of the Plan of 1801 contemplated the existence of Congregationalists and Presbyterians as two great and independent denominations, operating each according to its own wisdom, and intended to provide for and secure such a state of friendly independency, while the two denominations should extend themselves through the country. It is plain that the perverted operations under the Plan have not only failed of accomplishing the design of its authors, but have entirely overthrown that design. Instead of securing the independent extension of Congregationalism, it has

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\* See action of Medina Presbytery, Ohio Observer, April 23, 1845.

caused some *two thousand* churches formed by Congregationalists to be transferred, actually absorbing almost all the domestic evangelical labors of that denomination into Presbyterianism. But for this Plan the institutions of New England would have been spread wherever her sons emigrated, and in fact New England, in all her "liberty and union," would have spread over New York and all the West. A very large part of that portion of Presbyterian churches with which we remain associated, would have had no Presbyterian existence, but remaining in the liberty of their formation, the act of Presbyterial excision would have abolished the Plan of Union, and left us and our Presbyterian allies but one vast Congregational body.

Believing as this Convention does, and as our fathers did, in the Scriptural authority of Congregationalism, and its high superiority over any other system for the formation of Christian character, and the enterprising diffusion of Christian truth, we cannot but look upon these results as deeply injurious to the best interests of our country and of religion generally. Such a subversion as has taken place would never have been consented to by Congregationalists of 1801; and the opinions of those good men call upon us to counteract, and as far as possible remedy the consequences of their well-intended liberality.

The Committee cannot help feeling also, that the perverted operation of this Plan is unfair toward other evangelical denominations. The spirit of Congregationalism, while it claims its own independence and liberty of action, is a spirit of generous co-operation with evangelical Christians of all denominations. This Plan presents the parties to it as a grand and exclusive alliance, for which there does not seem to be any adequate reason, restraining Congregationalists from that generous co-operation with Christians not Presbyterians to which they are fairly entitled.

The Committee are unable to suggest any other Plan which would be likely to work better than that of 1801. That was as good as any *plan* which could be devised. The difficulty is inherent in the very design. The mode of action would be much the same, whatever might be the terms of the Plan, and the disastrous results precisely the same. The Committee could need no better proof of this than the startling fact, which appears to be well understood through this Convention, that the chief reason why we have not the pleasure of meeting any of our brethren from Wisconsin, except from the church in Milwaukee alone, is that the Plan of Union established there, though apparently very liberal in its provisions, so much embarrasses the Congregationalists that they have thought it necessary to abstain from so distinctive an act. In that Territory, so near the place of our meeting, from which we had reason to expect a large delegation, our Congregational brethren have a union with a body of Presbyterians much smaller than their own; a union which should not from its nature, preclude either party from acting distinctively

as Presbyterians or Congregationalists, but which is in fact an effectual bar to the exercise of that liberty by Congregationalists.

Nor can the Committee recommend any particular plan of formal union among Congregational churches, by which bodies either authoritative or advisory should be constituted. With some limited exceptions, there are no such bodies in New England. The "Associations" extend to the ministers alone, and the "Conferences," and some other arrangements extend only to meetings for devotion and the diffusion of intelligence. The spirit of Congregationalism is essentially a spirit of freedom and independence, as exhibited in the New Testament. Its bond of union is love, the strongest of all bonds, and which is very liable to be chafed and enfeebled by the addition of external arrangements.

In conclusion, the Committee express it as their unwavering opinion, that the placing of Congregationalists in fair and friendly relations with Christians of all denominations, the restoration of freedom of action in our own churches, and harmony between us and Presbyterians, the maintenance of Congregational institutions, and in short the best interests of religion and its professors in every view require, that the special union between Congregationalists and Presbyterians should be abandoned; and they beg leave to sum up the conclusions to which they have arrived in the following resolutions:

1. *Resolved*, As the judgment of this Convention, that the Plan of Union agreed upon in 1801, by and between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States and the General Association of Connecticut, ought to be abandoned; that no more organizations should be made under it, and that Congregational churches now under it would best promote their own prosperity, and all the objects of their association, by withdrawing as speedily as in Providence the door shall be opened by which they can retire without especial injury to the local interests in which they are placed.

2. *Resolved*, As the judgment of this Convention, that it is inexpedient to adopt any new plans of union by which Congregationalists shall bind themselves to any one denomination of Christians, but that they should exercise a liberal charity towards the disciples of our common Lord, to whatever denominations they may belong, never hindering them in their labors, but extending to them the hand of Christian brotherhood, co-operating with them in any way which Providence may indicate. And especially that in the new settlements of our country, and wherever the true Church of Christ is feeble, and unable without an enlarged liberality to support the institutions of Christianity, that in such cases Congregationalists should co-operate with other Christians in the support of those institutions upon any plan which their wisdom may suggest and the local circumstances require.

Rev. I. P. Langworthy of the Committee on the Narrative of the State of Religion, presented their report, which was adopted, as follows :—

**Narrative of the State of Religion.**

From the statements which have been made before the Convention by the ministers and delegates from the different parts of the country here represented, your Committee perceive abundant occasion for gratitude and thanksgiving to the great Head of the Church, for that degree of harmony and union which now so happily exists in Zion. Surely the Lord has been on our side, Israel may now say. And not alone for union and harmony are we called upon for thanksgiving ; but there has been to some extent, the evident presence of the Holy Spirit, both to humble, quicken and sanctify the Christian, and to awaken and convert the sinner. Revivals of religion have been enjoyed in many places, the precious fruits of which have already been realized in the accession of members to our churches, and in the elevation of the standard of piety among the followers of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Moreover, from these statements it appears that the number of the ministers of reconciliation is increasing within our bounds ; that the relations of pastors to their churches are more permanent ; that new churches are springing up ; that new houses of worship are being erected in many places ; that Sabbath Schools are better attended and are more efficiently conducted ; that the cause of temperance is decidedly onward in its movement, and that the condition and wants of the oppressed are better understood and more correctly appreciated.

While, for these things there is abundant occasion for thanksgiving to our God, still your Committee cannot fail to see and to state that there is nevertheless occasion for humiliation and earnest prayer and quickened zeal among the ministers and members of churches, from the fact that there are no more manifestations of the Spirit's presence and power in our land. Some precious seasons of revival have been reported, it is true, but compared with the number of churches from which reports have been made, they are lamentably few.

It does well become this Convention to inquire, why it is so ? Why is it not with our Zion *now* as in days that are past ! There are *reasons* for this so general a dearth among our churches. They cannot be resolved rightfully into the divine sovereignty, nor into the inefficiency of the means God has appointed for the conversion of men. God is the same, truth is the same, the power of the Holy Spirit is unabated, and it may be added, the human heart is the same now as it ever has been—*deceitful* and desperately wicked. Where then lies the difficulty ? Your Committee would respectfully inquire, whether it may not be that ministers and churches have been depending too much on *extra efforts*, or on the labors of some

others than those whose labors they enjoy? Whether they have not been unwilling to go forth in the strength of the Lord of Hosts, in the use of the regular and stated means of grace, looking for and expecting most *confidently* a blessing upon these alone? Popular talents, a winning and an attractive manner, and a glowing imagination are not the gifts of all who are called of God to minister in holy things. But holiness of heart, a strong, a living faith in God, a zeal that knows no abatement, are the rightful possession of every minister and every Christian, and successful labors for the conversion of sinners depend infinitely more on the latter, than on the former qualifications. May it not be then, that too many have withheld themselves from entire devotion to this work with confidence of success, from the feeling that they are not qualified, or have not the requisite natural gifts?

While your Committee would not undervalue extra efforts, so called, when demanded, yet they are fully persuaded that more ought to be expected and may be realized by the ordinary means of grace, if only ministers and Christians will prepare themselves for the work of the Lord as he requires—will enter upon it in his strength in humble dependence on Him—will, with the fullest sincerity, *believe and plead* His promises, and will look for and expect that success which he has heretofore vouchsafed to grant.

All which is respectfully submitted.

The Committee on the celebration of the Bi-Centennial of the completion of the Cambridge Platform, reported the following resolution, which was adopted:—

*Resolved*, That having learned with satisfaction, that the General Association of Massachusetts have commenced the preliminary arrangements for a Bi-Centennial celebration of the Organization of the Congregational denomination in this country—this Convention would invite the cordial co-operation of Congregationalists in the West and elsewhere, with that Association in the proposed observance.

Messrs. Cooke, Langworthy and C. G. Hammond were appointed a Committee to answer the following question which had been submitted to the Convention:—If an Association withdraws fellowship from one of its members, and a neighboring Presbytery receive him to membership, what is the duty of such Association in its relations to that Presbytery? The Committee subsequently reported the following resolution, which was adopted:—

*Resolved*, That if such a fact has occurred, it deserves rebuke; but as it is not properly within the design of this Convention to con-

sider such cases, we suggest a reference of it to the General Association of the State in which the fact occurred.

The following, from the business Committee was presented and adopted :—

*Whereas*, This Convention is informed that the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society in the distribution of libraries to feeble churches for the use of their schools, is disposed to give the preference to those that are Congregational, therefore

*Resolved*, That we express our gratification in view of this fact ; and we recommend that each Association designate one of its members whose duty it shall be to endorse suitable applications from feeble churches within its bounds, for gifts of libraries from that Society.

The Convention then adjourned till afternoon.

#### MONDAY AFTERNOON.

The Convention assembled at 2 o'clock, and spent the usual half hour in devotional exercises.

The resolution in regard to Knox College was taken up, and after discussion and amendment, was adopted as follows :—

*Whereas*, We are informed that the trustees of Knox College are erecting two buildings for college purposes, and that Rev. J. Blanchard, the President, is about to solicit aid for this purpose ; and whereas we have confidence in the character and standing of the College, and believe that its growth will promote the religious education so much needed among us, therefore

*Resolved*, That we commend the enterprise to the benevolent regards of the Society for Collegiate and Theological Education in the West.

Rev. Pindar Field, of the Committee to prepare a Statement of the Substance of the Confessions of Faith of Western Congregational Bodies, presented their report, which was adopted, as follows :—

#### Confessions of Faith, Etc.

The Committee “to prepare a Statement of the Substance of the Confessions of Faith and Ecclesiastical Constitutions adopted by Western Congregational Bodies,” respectfully report—That they deem the subject committed to them, second in importance to none which has claimed the attention of this Convention. As far as it can be done, it is the design of this report to present facts, upon

which all who note them may form an enlightened judgment. The members of this Convention come from nine different States or Territories of our country, and from Canada. With the exception of Massachusetts and Connecticut, they may properly be considered as representing Western Congregationalism. The Confession of Faith of five General Associations and a number of District Associations, have been examined. The District Associations represented in the Convention are seventeen in number; but of the Articles of Faith of some of them, we have no means at hand of forming a correct judgment, not having access to them. We will, however, present as full, detailed and satisfactory a statement as the data at command will allow. All these Confessions agree in relation to certain doctrines, which it is not in accordance with our present design specially to notice—such as the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures; the doctrine of the Trinity; the necessity, nature and extent of the Atonement; the resurrection; a future general judgment, its consequent rewards and punishments, &c. These, of course, we pass by without a particular examination. We shall content ourselves with the consideration of three or four points, evidently in view in the assignment of our subject.

1. In relation to the doctrine of *Divine Purposes or Decrees*. We bring together what the different Bodies have said on this point. The General Association of Iowa, in their Articles of Faith say,—“We believe that God governs all things according to his eternal and infinitely wise purpose, so as to render them conducive to his own glory and the greatest good of the Universe, and in perfect consistency with his hatred of sin, the free agency of man, and the importance of the use of means.” On this point the General Convention of Wisconsin have *verbatim* the same article. The local bodies connected with it have adopted the same Confession of Faith as the General Convention.

The General Association of Michigan, in their Article on the same doctrine, say,—“We believe that God created all things by the word of his power, and governs all things according to his eternal purposes.” We learn that the Marshall and Jackson Associations have adopted the same articles with their general body. The Eastern Conference is less explicit, and say, “that none do truly repent of sin and believe in Christ, but such as are renewed by the Holy Spirit, agreeably to the purpose of God, and in a manner perfectly consistent with human freedom; and that all such will be kept by the power of God unto salvation.”

The General Congregational Association of Illinois, on the same point, has the following,—“We believe God created all things for his own glory, and that according to his eternal purposes he governs all events, and that he governs all moral agents in a manner perfectly consistent with their free agency and accountability.” We have not obtained the Articles of the District Associations in Illinois, and do not report in relation to them.

The General Association of New York, on this point say,—“God hath foreordained and worketh all things according to his eternal purpose and the counsel of his own will.” The Oneida Association, which is a part of it, is still stronger and more explicit if possible on this point,—“God hath foreordained whatsoever cometh to pass.” The Monroe Association say,—“God created all things for his own glory, and according to his eternal purpose he governs all worlds, all events, and all moral beings, in a manner perfectly consistent with their free agency and accountability.” By their Constitution, all their local bodies are required to be in harmony with the general body in their Confessions of Faith, in order to be in connection with it. Consequently it has withdrawn fellowship from two of the local bodies, because of their error in doctrine.

2. In relation to the doctrine of *Depravity*. The General Association of Iowa, in their Confession of Faith, say,—“Mankind are by nature destitute of holiness, and at enmity against God; and so continue till regenerated by the Holy Spirit.”

The General Convention of Wisconsin say on the same point, that “In consequence of the apostasy of Adam, all mankind are totally depraved, and by nature children of wrath, and cannot be restored to the favor of God without an atonement.”

The General Association of Michigan say,—“We believe that salvation is freely offered to all men in the gospel, on condition of faith and repentance; and that, though naturally able to do all that God requires in order to be saved, yet in their natural state they all with one consent do reject Christ and his salvation.” Marshall and Jackson Conferences adopt the same. The Eastern Conference say, “That by voluntary disobedience, they (our first parents,) wickedly departed from God; in consequence of which, all mankind since the fall, are by nature destitute of holiness, continually inclined to evil, and unless renewed by the Divine Spirit, will finally perish.”

The General Association of New York, say in their Article on this point,—“In consequence of the transgression of our first parents, all their posterity become sinners, and are, in their natural, unregenerate state, totally sinful, and by the law of God condemned to eternal death.” Oneida Association is still more full and unequivocal on this point. Monroe Association declare, that in consequence of the fall of our first parents,—“All their posterity are subjects of entire moral depravity, for which they justly deserve the wrath of God forever.” All the District Associations connected with this general body, have substantially the same article on this point. So also, all these bodies are uniform, in their Articles of Faith, in maintaining the necessity of regeneration by the agency of the Holy Spirit; the utter impossibility of being saved without it; and the final perseverance of the saints. But in regard to the specialty of His agency in regeneration, we regret to say, some of them are not so explicit as would be desirable. Other points of doctrine might be brought up, such as the covenant of redemption, repentance

and faith in Christ, which these bodies are all uniform in avowing in their Confessions of Faith; but it is deemed unnecessary at the present time.

In relation to the doctrines of *Perfection*, the General Association of Iowa say,—“We believe that at death, the souls of believers become perfectly holy, and that at the last day, Christ will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness.”

The General Association of Michigan say,—“We believe that saints, the called and chosen of God, though morally imperfect during their earthly pilgrimage, will yet be preserved by his grace and confirmed unto the end, that they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The General Association of New York say,—“The souls of believers are, at their death, made perfectly holy, and immediately taken to glory.” The Monroe Association use precisely the same language, and add in another article, “still none do in this life perfectly keep the commandments of God, but do daily break them in thought, word and deed.” In some of these Confessions of Faith, we regret to say, there seems to be a neglect to express the sentiment which the Monroe Association has here embodied. They say nothing in them from which we can judge what sentiments are held in regard to the doctrine of *Perfection*.

In view of these Confessions, while their general orthodoxy is apparent, your Committee feel that justice requires them to state, that there is in some of the bodies having an orthodox creed, both Congregational and Presbyterian, in the West, a sprinkling of what is technically called modern *Perfectionism*. The evil comes in intangible forms, and its entire expression is, therefore, impossible. With regard to some of the smaller bodies represented here, we have not the evidence of their orthodoxy, nor in our view can it be obtained. We should have been better pleased if more of the bodies had explicitly stated what we have no doubt they believe on the subject of *Perfection*. With the limited data within our reach, it is impossible to present a report fully satisfactory to ourselves, much less can we expect it to be perfectly satisfactory to this Convention and to others who may seek light from us.

On motion, *it was voted*, that the various matters reported by the Business Committee, and which have not been the subject of action by this Convention, be recommitted.

The following resolution was unanimously adopted :—

*Resolved*, That the cordial thanks of this Convention be tendered to the members of the Congregational church, and to the citizens of

Michigan City generally, whose generous and abundant hospitalities we have shared during its protracted session.

The minutes were read and approved, after which the Convention united in prayer with Rev. J. D. Pierce, and adjourned *sine die*.

JOHN J. MITER,

President.

L. SMITH HOBART,  
CHARLES G. HAMMOND, } Secretaries.

## APPENDIX.

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### I.

#### **Concerning Agents of the Home Missionary Society.**

The following meager notes of the remarks made by most of the speakers on the resolution in regard to Agents of the Home Missionary Society, will afford some idea of the adverse interference referred to.

Mr. KIRBY expressed a strong desire that the facts should come out. From his own observation, he was convinced that the impression prevails extensively, that it is the business of the Home Missionary Society to build up Presbyterianism. It is expected of agents that they will do it. And yet he was sure that the Executive Officers of the Society intended to act with entire impartiality. They had indeed authorized him to declare their readiness to redress any wrongs in this matter, as soon as they should come to their knowledge.

Mr. LAIRD also expressed a hope that the facts would come out. He had himself some evidence in point. He had not been long in Michigan before an officer of the State Committee urged him to join the Presbytery, and told him *that it would greatly affect his influence.*

Mr. LOCKWOOD related the case of a Congregational church in Dundee, Michigan, which had recently been visited by Presbyterian brethren. Nearly all the members were called upon and solicited to unite with the Presbytery—the principal motive presented, being that they could not otherwise obtain aid from the Home Missionary Society. He also alluded to the fact that in the little village of Clinton, there is besides the Congregational church, which sustains itself, a small Presbyterian organization, which for several years has been kept in useless existence by help from the Home Missionary Society. He said that to very many in the community, this appeared to be a misappropriation of funds, and yet the facts are fully known to the agent of the Society.

Mr. FOSTER stated that one form of the evil was, that agents connived at and encouraged the partisan efforts of others, when they

avoided acting themselves ; and much of the mischief was done in forms that could not be made tangible.

Mr. JONES said—when I came into Michigan, there was no agent in the State. But the gentleman who superintended the affairs of the Society told me, that if I would avoid trouble, must I unite with the Presbytery. I replied, that I preferred Congregationalism. It was still urged that I should find trouble if I did not yield. I asked what evil I had done, that I should be required to surrender my principles, and said if I had done anything worthy of death, I refused not to die. This agent visited me several times, always urging me to join the Presbytery. Another minister who said he had been requested to keep an eye to the concerns of the Society, visited me repeatedly, urging me to do the same ; and his argument was, that it would be of advantage to the church in securing aid from the American Home Missionary Society. I told him distinctly that I should not. He then at once wrote a letter to the Secretaries of the Society accusing me of perfectionism and a want of orthodoxy ; and the result was, that I was prevented from receiving aid for some time. Having ascertained what had been done, I went to that minister and asked him on what grounds he questioned my orthodoxy. He said my church had told him. I asked him how the church had conveyed the information. He said it was not the church, but Mr. Such-a-one in the church (naming one who had been hostile to me.) I asked him if he did not know that this Mr. Adams was opposed to me. I asked him if it was a Christian course for him to take up an evil report and make such a use of it, and I invited him to come and visit every member of my church, and read my sermons, and see what grounds he had for his report. To this he consented ; but he never came, and but for the fact that I was well known at the East, and had such men as Dr. Hopkins of Auburn, to vouch for me, I should have been kept out of the employment of the Society. This fact I should not have disclosed here, but that I was hindered from giving it where it more properly belonged, to the Synod of Michigan. I also know a fact, which is one of a numerous class—an agent discouraged a Congregational minister from going to a certain church, and then immediately sent a Presbyterian minister to the same church.

Mr. PIERCE remarked,—We of Michigan have been spoken of as having manifested more heat than other brethren on this floor, and the reason was that we had been in a furnace, and we have been threatened that if we would not bow down to the golden image that had been set up, we should be cast into a fiery furnace ; and for my part I have been in this furnace for fifteen years. When I came into this State I was everywhere told, that Congregationalism would not do for the West ; but I would not join a Presbytery. I might relate many facts similar to what have been stated ; I give only one. There is a church in a town in Michigan which was a strong Congregational church ; they had called a pastor. The question was

brought up whether they should not join the Presbytery. A minister who had been, and who I think was at that time an agent of the Society, came to the place and arranged their affairs so that a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing the church as Presbyterian. The book was brought forward and the proposals made, but the church voted not to do it. When the vote was declared, this agent made remarks against the Moderator, because he did not exert himself more for a different result. The minority withdrew, and were organized by this man into a Presbyterian church, and the result is that the majority, to save a perpetual quarrel, have been forced to yield and come in.

Mr. Lockwood remarked that the church in Adrian was three years ago one of the strongest Congregational churches in the State. They had been repeatedly urged to come into Presbytery; but as they could not be persuaded, it was requested that the Presbytery might hold their sittings in the place. This was granted, and a Committee was appointed to sit with them. The meeting came, and individuals went round to all the members of the church, *except the deacons*, asking them if they did not think that the church would be more prosperous under the Presbyterian rule. A majority was found to assent, and were organized into a Presbyterian church without letting the church know what was intended. Here a meeting-house had been built at an expense of \$8,000. For the sake of peace, the others have with great difficulty, been persuaded to come in. But they have felt themselves injured, and the difficulty cannot be healed in this generation.

Mr. FIELD remarked that he had had large experience and observation of this kind of injuries. But he had found great benefit from a patient endurance of injury.

Mr. FOSTER was persuaded that many things of this nature had occurred, that would not occur again. Men of larger hearts are coming into the Presbyterian church, and the time will soon come, when we shall not have to beg pardon for existence.

Mr. HALE regarded this discussion as of great value. The remedy for such injuries is, to make them known. We see the propensity to seek redress in this way in the child—who will “GO AND TELL ‘MA.” We need nothing more to protect us, than to make known the facts.

Mr. KIRBY said that we could not expect agents not to have any opinions, or take any action to sustain their opinions; but it was not their right silently and covertly to operate against either interest; and it was a great perversion, for the Society through their instruments, to build up one interest against the other; and yet the Presbyterians in some localities seem to expect it. He had himself hardly been appointed to his agency, before the report went out, that the Society had changed its policy and appointed a Congregational agent, and were about building up Congregationalism. The subject was even brought up in the Synod, and action demanded

upon it. Where this feeling exists, all agents are in danger. I find that so strong is the sensitiveness on this subject, that I am in danger of being partial to Presbytery, to avoid suspicion of Congregational leaning.

Dr. WESTON, of Milwaukee, on a subsequent occasion, and when another subject was under debate, alluded to this discussion as follows :

Before I sit down, I beg leave to allude to a matter which I should have brought forward in connexion with the remarks upon the partialities of local agents. I say nothing of the partialities of the agent for Wisconsin ; Presbyterian Congregationalism is, I suppose with him a matter of taste. And while I cheerfully accord to every man the right of private judgment, I reiterate my own conviction, that the Plan of Union in Wisconsin is sapping the foundations of Congregationalism, and merging the faith of our fathers in a church as foreign to theirs, as republicanism is foreign to aristocracy. Sir, I owe it to Bishop Peet, of Wisconsin, to say that no man is more indefatigable in his labors than that gentleman.

The PRESIDENT. It is not in order to allude to Brother Peet as Bishop of Wisconsin.

Dr. W. The President is over sensitive when allusion is made to these agents. Sir, I mean to be understood, that the local Conventions of Wisconsin are held at such times and in such rotation, as to make it convenient for the Bishop to attend them all in the space of a year, and exercise over each, all that supervision and influence for which his peculiar talents and position so eminently qualify him. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

## II.

### The Convention and its Proceedings.

The following is part of an editorial contained in the *New England Puritan* of August 20, 1846, in regard to the Convention and its proceedings :—

The members were assembled from different and distant localities, and it was the first opportunity which they had had for conferring together touching the policy and interests of the denomination at the West ; and it would not have been strange if there had been, especially in the commencement, some difference of views. The subject which excited the most discussion and difference of feeling, was that of inviting Presbyterians who were present, to sit and deliberate with the Convention as corresponding members. Because this has been the custom in bodies meeting for other purposes, some felt that we should be uncourteous and unkind not to do it in a convention assembled for a purely denominational purpose. Others felt that when a family was assembled to discuss its own family mat-

ters, the neighbors had no right to regard it as uncourteous if they were not invited in, to take part in the discussion ; and that there was an incongruity in asking Presbyterians to advise with us, in measures to sustain ourselves against Presbyterian encroachments. The vote finally decided against admitting corresponding members ; and some who at first pleaded for their admission, were afterwards satisfied of its impropriety. We think that if there should be another such Convention next year, the question would hardly be raised at all. Generally we may say, that the members of the Convention were, with a few exceptions, on most questions very much of one mind when they separated.

Another feature of the Convention, was its *religious* and *devotional* character. The members from the first, felt that their action was to touch matters that were as delicate as they were important ; that while they were called upon to speak and act with firmness and decision, they eminently needed divine assistance to be kept from rashness and injurious action. They therefore, in the outset, resolved to open every session with a devotional exercise of half an hour, and to spend every evening in preaching and prayer. And the result was, that we had decided manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit, not only in giving harmony to our deliberations and action, but in elevating the tone of religious feeling among the people of the place. The devotional and preaching exercises showed a steady increase of interest to the last ; and the pastor of the church spoke with gratitude and delight of the influence of the exercises on his own people.

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It will be perceived that the Convention, in their reports, have used great plainness of speech ; for they felt that it was due to truth, to the cause for which they assembled, and to the Christian public whom they addressed ; and they felt also, that the time had come when they would have a candid hearing.

We have already spoken of the harmony of the proceedings and results. We should further say, that an unusual spirit of courtesy, order and candor, characterized the debates. Rarely have we been in a Convention, in which so many matters of so deep interest have been discussed, by so many persons viewing things from different stand-points, and yet with so much of good feeling and Christian courtesy. And most of the votes that were passed on the more important matters, were either unanimous or with a very few dissenting voices. It would not be strange if, in such a Convention, there should be here and there one connected with Congregational bodies, yet in heart and policy desirous of repressing the advance of distinctive Congregationalism ; and if there should be editors or others whose interests were to be disturbed by this advance. But if we experienced some checks upon our zeal from this source, it was trifling, and subservient to good results. And though perhaps most individuals, in reviewing the proceedings, might be able to lay a

finger on here and there a vote, or a passage of a report, which he would prefer not to have had passed, most came away abundantly satisfied with the proceedings as a whole, and with the feeling that a great and good work had been done.

## III.

## Results of the Convention.

Among the immediate results of this Convention may be mentioned—First, the formation of personal acquaintance among brethren who were widely scattered. Engaged in similar fields of labor, the comparison of their views and experience as Congregationalists, afforded them much encouragement, at a period too, when un concealed opposition to the extension of their church polity, made such encouragement especially grateful.

The Convention also gave a new impulse to the study of the Congregational polity. Its history, its principles, and its proper working, became more thoroughly understood; and thereafter, it was more carefully distinguished from Presbyterianism—by which its ideas and usages had become much adulterated. Thenceforward, it was more correctly and consistently carried into practice.

Then again, if there were any tendencies to doctrinal error among the ministers or the churches, the effect of the Convention was to correct them. Earnest co-operation in seeking to maintain and promote their common cause in the West, served strongly to hold all in unity of sentiment. Then very naturally, the newly awakened sense of relationship with the whole brotherhood, in a great work, greatly deepened their existing feeling of accountability to one another and to all, both for soundness in the faith and for righteousness of life.

But further, the occurrence of this Convention, awakened much attention at the East. Commendatory letters in regard to it, were published by such well known and conservative ministers as Dr. Nelson and Dr. Davis of Massachusetts,—while it was also fiercely assailed by Rev. Dr. Eddy—a Presbyterian of New Jersey, in a letter published in the *New York Evangelist*. To this, David Hale, Esq., of New York,—then editor of the *Journal of Commerce*, made a most effective and timely reply.

Congregationalism thus became the subject of more than usual attention, both at the East and the West, and the interest in it,

steadily grew until it uttered itself in the call issued by the General Association of New York, convening the Congregational Convention which assembled at Albany, in October, 1852. This was a very large and influential body, finely representing the growth in thought and feeling that had taken place within the preceding six years. But this Albany Convention,—and in truth, the whole movement that issued in the establishment of our National Council, though remoter, were nevertheless real results of the Convention held at Michigan City, in 1846.

## IV.

**The Albany Convention.**

The following is part of an editorial article from the pen of Rev. Parsons Cooke, which appeared in the *Puritan Recorder*, of Boston, October 21, 1852.

\* \* \* \* \*

In order to qualify ourselves to act understandingly in the case, we went out West to see for ourselves. At that time the Presbyterians were holding what they called Presbyterian and Congregational Conventions, ostensibly for common religious purposes, but really, as the proceedings of the Convention showed, for the main purpose of thwarting the incipient efforts of a rising Congregationalism. One of the editors of *The Puritan Recorder* attended the Convention at Cleveland, and the writer of this, attended the next one, which was held in Detroit, especially for the purpose of getting information as to what course we ought to take. At the latter Convention, we saw that most of the members were Presbyterians, and that if we were to judge from what was said and done, they had assembled for the special purpose of convincing the few dispirited Congregational brethren present, that they were to be blamed for not joining the Presbytery; and that efforts to sustain distinctive Congregationalism were full of all mischief. One distinguished speaker after another, got up, and gloried in having been cradled in New England Congregationalism, and in having departed from it to Presbyterianism, and in still being a true representative of the church which he had forsaken.

A whole afternoon was taken up by speeches of this kind. But these speeches overshot the mark. They created in the minds of the few Congregationalists present, more of revulsion than persuasion. And it was during these sittings of the Detroit Convention,

that the resolution was formed by individuals to hold a Western Congregational Convention. The first thought of such a Convention that came to our minds, passed between us and Rev. L. Smith Hobart of Michigan, while sitting in that Convention, and listening to those speeches, which we regarded as an outrage upon our interest. Before we left the Detroit Convention, the plan was laid to hold the Convention of Congregational brethren which met the next year at Michigan City.

That Convention was numerously attended, considering the small number of Congregational ministers then at the West, and the distance which they had to travel. We, with some half-dozen others at the East, who felt some rising zeal in the cause, attended ; and we never regretted the labor of that journey. In looking over the report of that Convention, which we made and published at the time, we have been struck with the remarkable fact, that most of the important measures passed in this Albany Convention, were substantially the same as those which had been passed six years before, by the Convention at Michigan City.\*

Now note the change of public sentiment. No paper at the East except ours, published the reports of that Convention at Michigan City. And most of the papers then frowned upon attempts to promulgate the views adopted by that Convention. And indeed from that time to this, with a few exceptions, this has been the position taken by the papers of the two denominations. Till very recently it has been regarded in New England as a breach of the peace for a newspaper to plead for sustaining Congregational principles, and to give voice to our injured missionaries at the West. For the sin of promulgating just the same views which have now been adopted by acclamation in the Albany Convention, and hailed as a just thing by thousands of new converts to them, we have been denounced as sectarian, and frowned upon as introducing needless divisions.

\* \* \* \* \*

While sitting in the Albany Convention, we clearly recognized the hand of Providence in the concurrence of events to the issue, to which the Convention came. We were content to sit still and see the salvation of God. And we were constantly conning the stanza :—

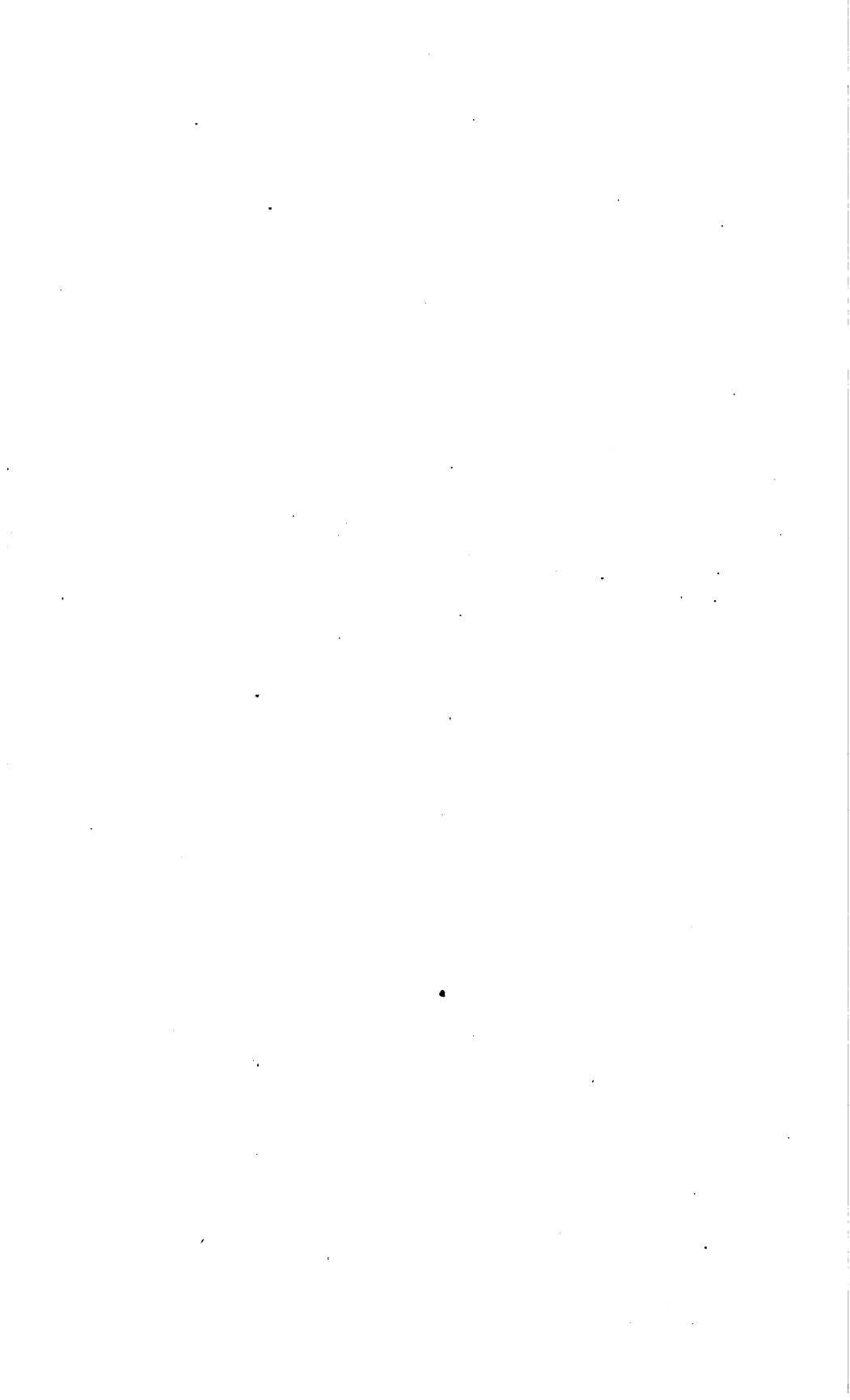
" Though seed lie buried long in dust,  
 It shan't deceive the hope,  
 The precious grain shall ne'er be lost,  
 For grace insures the crop.

\* Mr. Hobart regarded the action of the Michigan City Convention on the "Plan of Union of 1801," of such importance, that he published at his own expense, a pamphlet edition of the Report there adopted, and at the opening of the Albany Convention, distributed 500 copies among the members.

While the Convention were with great zeal passing these measures, we casually met one of the Western brethren, [L. S. H.] with whom we had counselled and labored in the early part of the movement,—when we both commenced at the same instant, and on the first salutation, to repeat the above stanza.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now that the revolution has been effected in the public mind, and it has been received as an established fact, that Congregational churches may, and ought to be planted in the West, and that it is no sin to plead for such a thing, it might be interesting to write the history of this revolution.





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AUTHOR  
Convention, Michigan  
TITLE  
City, Ind., 1846.

Call Number  
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City, Ind., 1846. .W4  
Minutes... A3  
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